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Central Intelligence Agency



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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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SOVIET INTERESTS IN GUINEA

Relations between the USSR and Guinea have been cool since 1977, when President Sekou Toure asked Moscow to halt reconnaissance flights from Conakry. Toure was unhappy with Soviet aid, and he hoped that a loosening of ties to Moscow would stimulate Western aid. Both Moscow and Conakry have reasons for continuing contacts, however, despite the recent coup in Guinea and the new regime's apparent intention to turn toward the West.

- The Soviets make periodic naval visits to Guinea, and a Soviet minesweeper on fisheries patrol off Morocco makes regular calls at Conakry. Soviet transport planes refuel there en route to Angola and Cuba.
- The bauxite mine at Kindia, which was developed with Soviet credits and is still managed by Soviet technicians, supplies the equivalent of about one-eighth of the USSR's bauxite needs, and enables Guinea to repay loans from Moscow.
- The USSR has between 325 and 450 economic technicians in Guinea, including 200 teachers and 25 medical personnel, while some 350 Guineans are taking academic courses in the USSR.
- Guinea's armed forces are primarily equipped with Soviet-made weapons, and the dependence for spare parts and technical services suggests a continuing military relationship.

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] the
 Current Support Division, Third World Branch, Office of Soviet
 Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be addressed
 to Chief, Current Support Division [redacted]

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Soviet Aid

The USSR took advantage of French President de Gaulle's total withdrawal of aid from Guinea when it became independent in 1958 and Toure's left-leaning ideological orientation to establish close ties through military and economic aid. Up to 1983 Moscow had committed \$188.5 million in military aid--of which \$60 million was free or provided at discounts and the rest on credits.

Soviet economic aid to Guinea through 1983 was \$235.8 million committed, of which \$29.7 million was in grants. More than \$222 million has already been drawn.

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Under its military aid program, the USSR has equipped Guinea's armed forces, trained 920 Guineans in the USSR and many more within the country, and maintained military equipment. Apparently in partial repayment, Guinea granted Moscow military access to Conakry's port and airport.

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Military Access

Soviet penetration in Guinea began almost traditionally with military aid, which has continued to overshadow the economic aid. Soviet warships began calling at Conakry in 1969. In November 1970, following an unsuccessful Portuguese-backed attack on Conakry by Guinean exiles, Toure specifically asked Moscow to send warships. This symbolic support developed into an almost continuous Soviet West African naval patrol primarily supported by Soviet auxiliaries in Conakry harbor. From then on Soviet warships either altered scheduled movements to respond to Toure's requests or maintained a visible presence in the harbor at his behest. After civil disturbances over food shortages in 1977, a visiting Soviet amphibious ship unloaded 10 armored vehicles and temporarily parked them in a downtown square.

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In June 1977, however, Toure rescinded permission for TU-95 visits. He had become less apprehensive about exiles, and he indicated to the US Embassy that he was concerned about the threat the Soviet flights represented to his nonaligned image. He may also have hoped that stopping the flights would enhance prospects for Western aid. Toure had by then become unhappy with the level and quality of Soviet economic aid and, to a lesser extent, military aid. Moscow did not

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increase its aid, and, in mid-1978, Toure ordered the 200 or more Soviet military personnel stationed in Guinea reduced to some two dozen. The number has since remained at no more than 50. [redacted]

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Soviet warships continue to call at Conakry, although the number of ship-days in port there fell from 1,414 in 1978 to 309 in 1983. [redacted]

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Economic Role

The USSR's economic role in Guinea has declined in recent years but remains significant. During the 1960s and '70s, Moscow provided much of Guinea's heavy equipment and consumer goods as well as military supplies. Trade in 1983 was \$27.7 million in Guinean imports in 1983--mostly spare parts for military equipment and civilian vehicles--and \$59.5 million worth of exports that consists almost entirely of bauxite. [redacted]

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The declining importance of Soviet trade is a result of Guinea's increased reliance on Western countries for supplies, investment and economic aid. In Guinea, as in most other Third World countries, the USSR has shown no inclination to make significant new economic aid commitments. In the past decade, the USSR has committed only \$9.6 million in new economic aid to Guinea--in the same period that China promised \$46.2 million. Moscow's continuing trade relations with Guinea represent a residual effect of Conakry's still paying off past Soviet credits with exports and buying parts for the military and civilian equipment obtained with those credits. [redacted]

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Nonetheless, Guinea still counts heavily on Soviet aid and advisors in education, health, marine research, and running the Kindia bauxite complex. The mine has been a mixed blessing for Moscow. Relations with Soviet experts at the mine have been vexed, and exports of bauxite from it embitter relations because the USSR pays less than the free market price. [redacted]

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Another strain on relations has been Soviet fishing in Guinean waters. Some 10 Soviet boats fish off Guinea under a treaty, but as many as 60 others operate there illegally. Guinean officials complain that the Soviets have reneged on treaty obligations to sell some of their catch in Conakry and aid Guinea's own fishing efforts. When negotiations on a new treaty came to an impasse early this year, the Soviets halted fish deliveries that had been an important part of Conakry's food supply. Guinea yielded and extended the old treaty indefinitely. [redacted]

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Political Relations

Moscow signaled its cool attitude toward Guinea with its protocol reaction to Toure's death on 26 March. Whereas Guinea had sent Prime Minister Beavogui to President Andropov's funeral less than two months earlier, the USSR sent only a CPSU secretary, Ivan Kapitonov, to Toure's funeral. The highest-ranked Soviet official to sign the condolence book at the Guinean Embassy in Moscow was a first deputy premier, Geydar Aliyev. The Soviets reportedly also refused Ethiopian Chairman Mengistu's request to delay his Moscow visit long enough to attend the funeral of Toure, who was scheduled to succeed him as head of the Organization of African Unity. [redacted]

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Despite their troubles, normal contacts were maintained between the USSR and Guinea up to the recent coup. The CPSU sent the first secretary of the Tajikistan party to the congress last November of Guinea's only political party, which had in the past been designated by Moscow as a "progressive" movement. In January a new cultural and scientific cooperation protocol was signed between the two countries, in February the USSR gave 1,000 blankets, 1 ton of medicine and 50 tons of fresh fish to Guinean earthquake victims, and in March a Guinean labor delegation signed an agreement in Moscow for cooperation with the Soviet trade unions organization from 1985 to 1989. [redacted]

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Moscow reacted cautiously to the 3 April coup in Conakry. Izvestiya acknowledged that the new leaders had denounced domestic policy errors that created a grave economic situation, but it emphasized that Toure's foreign policy had not been challenged. This left open the possibility for the USSR to continue its relations without change. [redacted]

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Outlook

The USSR probably will try to maintain the present level of relations with Guinea but is unlikely to make any significant increased aid commitments in an effort to enhance its position in Conakry. The main Soviet interests there now are in maintaining the already reduced naval and air access and in a continuing supply of bauxite. [redacted]

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Moscow wants to retain at least some access to make periodic naval calls at Conakry, service its fisheries patrol minesweeper there, and refuel transport planes. Probably the most important of these access authorizations are for aircraft refueling. The USSR has in the past unsuccessfully sought similar permission in alternative places like the Cape Verde Islands, but Guinea is the only West African country that currently permits Moscow transit and refueling rights for military flights to Angola. Alternative routes might be difficult to obtain, and a loss of access to Angola would greatly inconvenience Soviet efforts to maintain influence in Luanda. [redacted]

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The Soviets probably would like to resume TU-95 flights from Conakry, that permitted much better reconnaissance coverage of important Atlantic sealanes than can be obtained from the present occasional use of Luanda. However, the initial orientation of the new Guinean leadership, combined with the apparent Soviet unwillingness to provide large amounts of aid, probably make Moscow pessimistic about being able to resume flights. [redacted]

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Although it has been stockpiling much of the bauxite imported from Guinea, the USSR presumably wants to continue receiving this important element in its long-term aluminum production plans. It also wants to recover debts from Guinea, which has little other than bauxite and diamonds with which to pay. At the same time, Guinea probably will be reluctant to jeopardize its efforts to attract Western investment by reneging on its debts to Moscow. Conakry might, however, try to renegotiate the price for its bauxite to closer to free market rates, and it might also take a tougher line on Soviet fishing. [redacted]

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The USSR probably is also interested in continuing good political relations with Guinea. Moscow probably feels that although Guinea, as a member of the Islamic Conference, has voted against the Soviet position on Afghanistan in the United Nations, its non-aligned status and its leading role in the OAU make it worth cultivating. [redacted]

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From Guinea's standpoint, outwardly proper relations with the USSR will remain important. The new leaders are too conscious of their economic problems to reject any untied form of aid, however small. Although new Guinean Prime Minister Traore has publicly appealed for French and other foreign help in rebuilding the armed forces, the new leaders probably want to keep their present Soviet armaments working. Conakry thus needs continued access to Soviet spare parts and technical assistance. [redacted]

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